

The Village of Briarcliff Manor

Sustainability Advisory Committee

- and -

Environmental Advisory Council

Spring 2023 Newsletter



Welcome to our spring newsletter!

April is Earth Month, and the world will celebrate Earth Day on April 22, 2023. This day is a celebration of, and a tribute to, our planet Earth and its natural resources. Most importantly, Earth Day is a reminder of our individual impact on our environment, and a reminder of our responsibility towards creating a more sustainable future.

The theme for Earth Day this year is **Invest in Our Planet**. The **Sustainability Advisory Committee** and the **Environmental Advisory Council** pledge to work with the larger Briarcliff Manor community on projects aimed at promoting environmental awareness, and service to the planet.

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Transitioning to Sustainable Landscaping Practices

Spring is the perfect time!

As homeowners with our own little slice of nature in our yards, there are so many ways we can make a meaningful contribution to environmental sustainability. We've grown into the habit of using (and paying for!) conventional landscaping practices that are harmful to the air, soils, and waterways within our community, as well as the plants, birds, pollinators, and other wildlife that call our Village home. With the newness of spring comes a fresh opportunity to change the narrative of how we treat the nature around us.

**Here are some ways to make a real positive difference
for nature in our own yards:**

Reduce lawn area and plant native plants that are naturally adapted to live in our local ecosystem. Lawns require a tremendous amount of energy, time, and money to maintain in pristine condition. They also use up a massive amount of water (lawns are the largest irrigated crop in the U.S.!) and are the source of runoff of toxic chemicals like pesticides into our local waterways, threatening not only the habitat of other species, but the quality of our own water. Reducing mowed areas also cuts back on fossil fuel use and emissions from gas-powered equipment. Native grasses and wildflowers create visual interest, a sense of place, and habitat value. They also require fewer resource inputs to maintain, as they are already adapted to our region's climate. We can change the outdated cultural expectation of having pristine, expansive, and ecologically sterile lawns!



Eliminate (or reduce) pesticides and chemical fertilizers in lawn areas. In areas you'd like to maintain as lawn for children, pets, or other purposes, consider accepting the presence of some "weeds" and eliminate the application of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. Many contain known carcinogens, to which our children and pets are especially susceptible. Scattered weeds can be mowed along with the grass, and still provide a short green groundcover. Several species of native groundcovers can also be planted as a low-maintenance alternative to lawn grass. In fall, mulching leaves into lawn areas is a practical alternative to synthetic fertilizers.

Transitioning to Sustainable Landscaping Practices

Spring is the perfect time!



Delay spring yard clean-up. Important pollinators like bees and butterflies overwinter in the hollow dried flowers and grass stalks from the previous growing season. Ridding our yards of this “debris” too soon also wipes out these hibernating insects that would pollinate our wildflowers and garden vegetables and provide food for nesting songbirds. Blowing leaves also harms beneficial insects overwintering in leaf litter. Instead, if you prefer to remove last year’s growth from your yard, wait until temperatures are consistently over 50 degrees to give overwintering pollinators time to emerge from their winter homes. Alternatively, dried stems can simply remain in place as new plant growth covers them. Expect to see more summer fireflies by leaving fallen leaves, too!

Think “habitat.” Want more songbirds and butterflies? Plant native plants as their food source (which also feed the insects that birds eat), provide a consistent water source like a bird bath, and create cover with native shrubs and small trees to provide shelter from bad weather and places to hide or hunt for prey. And, don’t poison them with pesticides, which, counter to what the term suggests, do not target just “pests.” (Those “pests” are also food for birds and other wildlife).



Transitioning to Sustainable Landscaping Practices

Spring is the perfect time!

Go electric! Electric landscaping equipment like mowers and blowers are widely available for homeowners to purchase. If you use a landscaping company to care for your lawn, encourage them to make the transition to electric equipment.

Celebrate and communicate your contribution. Consider registering your yard as a site along the Pollinator Pathway, take the Pollinator Protection Pledge (Xerces Society), apply for recognition as a Certified Wildlife Habitat (National Wildlife Federation), or get on the map of the Homegrown National Park. You can even purchase signs from these groups to proudly display in your yard amidst the healthy habitat you've created, which helps neighbors learn about these beneficial practices, too.



Photo Credit: Xerces.org

The more positive actions we take as individuals and families, the greater the cumulative impact to the ecological function, resilience, and beauty of our shared community.

Local opportunities to purchase native plants for your home landscape:

- The **Native Plant Center's** plant sale will be held on Saturday, April 29, at Westchester Community College. <https://nativeplantcenter.org/>
- **Teatown** is holding its annual PlantFest event on Friday, May 12 and Saturday, May 13. <https://www.teatown.org/plantfest/>
- **Wild Gardens Nursery** sells native plants at various times throughout the year, including during their upcoming Spring Sale on April 21 and 22. <https://wildgardensnursery.com/>

More helpful links:

Pollinator Pathway: <https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/>

Pollinator Protection Pledge: <https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/pollinator-protection-pledge>

NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat: <https://www.nwf.org/CertifiedWildlifeHabitat>

Homegrown National Park: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

Healthy Yards: <https://www.healthyyards.org/>

Healthy Lawn, Healthy You!

Manicured green lawns, which are mostly dominated by non-native species of turf grass, are biodiversity deserts. Chemical pesticides like glyphosate have been linked to increased risk of cancer in adults, children, and pets.

Reducing the size of your lawn can offer significant financial, aesthetic health, and environmental benefits.

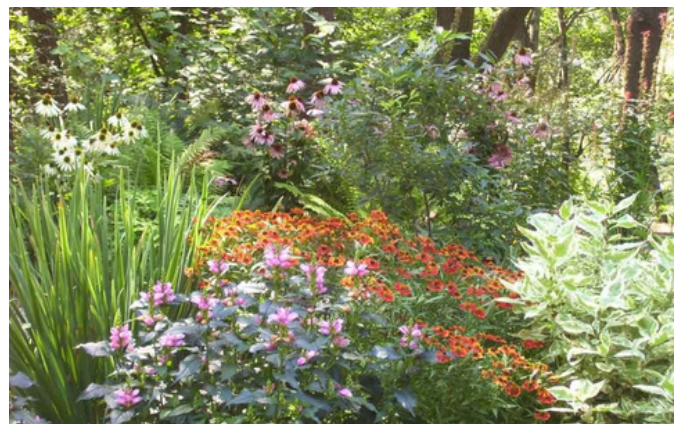


Here are some alternatives to the conventional lawn:



Ground covers like moss or creeping thyme are the perfect no-mow alternative to grass.

A **rain garden** with swamp milkweed, ferns, and turtleheads can capture runoff from impervious areas and allow it to seep slowly into the ground.



Healthy Lawn, Healthy You!



Meadows comprise native species that thrive without irrigation. Meadows absorb stormwater and prevent flooding. Meadows support pollinators.

Sustainable and beautiful **clover lawns** are becoming very popular; here's why. Clover lawns need **LESS water, LESS maintenance, and NO chemical treatment** compared to grass lawns. They provide pollinators with food and habitat. White clover or Dutch clover is a low-growing perennial which only needs to be mowed a few times a year. Unlike grass, it is drought-tolerant because of its deep root system. Since White Clover out-competes broadleaf weeds, homeowners can ask their landscapers to refrain from using weedkillers. Clover converts nitrogen in the air to a natural fertilizer, and is also considered a living mulch. Clover lawns therefore do not need to be fertilized!



Additionally, reducing the size of your lawn and replacing sections with meadow or clover will save you \$\$\$ and precious time. WIN-WIN!!

Transitioning to Electric Landscaping Equipment

Have you stepped into your local Home Depot or Lowe's recently? Their shelves are piled high with brands like Ryobi, GreenWorks, DeWalt, Ego, and many others. The country's landscaping equipment is going electric! Using electric landscaping equipment makes sense from noise, emissions and health perspectives! Plus, the power and runtime of electric landscaping equipment has improved dramatically over the past few years. Although the initial cost of electric landscaping equipment may be higher than their gas-powered counterparts, it is estimated that over their lifetime, battery equipment will wind up costing less.



The battery revolution began with **electric trimmers** and leaf blowers, which are easier to power with batteries. This allowed the transition away from gas-powered trimmers and leaf blowers, which are heavy, noisy, and emit fumes. Electric trimmers are now widely used and may soon overtake their gas-powered counterparts. When it comes to leaf blowers, please remember that **LEAVES ARE NOT LITTER!** However, turf grass does get smothered by leaves. To avoid this, please prioritize mulching them in place. When leaves need to be relocated to avoid creating slippery surfaces, **electric leaf blowers** are preferable to their gas-powered counterparts.



Electric lawnmowers come in three categories: push, self-propelled, and riding. Today's top cordless mowers can tackle an hour or two of cutting on a single charge—enough for around half an acre. Compared to gas-powered mowers, which need spark plugs, oil changes, and gas, their electric counterparts just need to be charged or plugged in. They are quieter, and best of all: no fumes!

EVs for Electric Landscaping

Today's electric vehicle revolution is keeping pace with the advances in electric landscaping equipment. The all-electric Ford 150 Lightning has a 7700 lbs max towing capacity in addition to having ample space in the trunk to transport an electric lawnmower along with its battery pack to landscaping jobs. Battery packs can be charged from the truck between jobs, and then plugged into the mower/trimmer/blower when needed.



Seth Leitman, a member of the Briarcliff SAC and President of the **Greater Hudson Valley Electric Vehicle Association**, partnered with Dan Welsh (**Westchester Power, Sustainable Westchester**) and Leo Weigman (**Community Solar, Sustainable Westchester**) to demonstrate the use of the Ford 150 Lightning for sustainable landscaping.



Native Plant Spotlight

Woody Plant:

***Amelanchier canadensis* (Serviceberry; Shadbush)**



Image Credit: missouribotanicalgarden.org

The native Serviceberry grows as a deciduous large shrub or small tree. With delicate white blossoms, it is one of the first flowering trees of the spring, and its common name “Shadbush” is derived from its bloom period corresponding with the time that shad swim up-river to their spawning grounds. The purple berry-like fruits are edible to humans, but are usually devoured by birds first! This is a great small tree to plant in partly shady spots with moist soils.

Herbaceous Plant:

***Podophyllum peltatum* (Mayapple)**

Mayapple is a native woodland perennial, emerging in the spring like little umbrellas rising from the ground. It tends to grow in colonies and dies back in the summer. It's an interesting addition to a shade garden. All parts of the plant are highly toxic except the ripe fruits, which are an important food resource for box turtles. In turn, box turtles disperse the seeds to new locations.



Photo Credit: Missouri Department of Conservation

Spotlight on Invasive Plants in Your Garden

Sustainability in landscapes is about maintaining a balance in nature.

Invasive (non-native) plants upset this balance. These plants crowd out and shade out native plants that host pollinating insects and birds, and they spread easily.

Invasives come from all over the world. In fact, many plants that are now considered invasive were originally brought to the United States as landscaping plants. Some of the most common offenders, which you may find in your yard, are: Multiflora Rose, Garlic Mustard, Burning Bush, and Japanese Barberry.

What can or should you do if you have these plants in your yard? Don't use pesticides! Such use can harm native plants and healthy soil. Instead, follow the tips below for removing these invaders.



Multiflora rose establishes itself in dense, impenetrable thickets.
Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

Currently, **Multiflora Rose** is found in 41 states. It is classified among the top invasive plant species for the Northeast by the U.S. Forest Service. To remove Multiflora Rose, pull out easy-to-pull plants. If you can't hand-pull multiflora rose (be careful of the thorns!), then you can dig out the plant. Otherwise, you may have to repeatedly cut or mow the plant to stunt its growth.

Garlic Mustard is an invasive herb that has spread throughout much of the United States. The roots produce a chemical that is toxic to other plants. Fortunately, Garlic Mustard is easy to pull. Be sure to remove the entire root, and try to pull it before it flowers. Bag pulled Garlic Mustard and dispose of as trash. Don't add it to your compost pile!



Spotlight on Invasive Plants in your Garden



Burning Bush may escape cultivation and displace native species. Its resistance to deer browsing may lead to increased browsing on native plants, and its berries can be toxic to native birds. Unless the entire root system and all berries can be removed, the bush should be cut down. Returning regularly to cut or mow any resprouted stems will suppress regrowth.

Prevalent in the Eastern United States, **Japanese Barberry** forms dense stands that compete with native trees and plants. As with burning bush, unless the entire root system can be dug up and removed, the easiest option for eradicating Japanese Barberry bushes is to cut it to its roots, and return to cut new growth every few months.



Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). Photo: Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

For more information and a list of plants that are considered invasive in New York, go to:

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/isprohibitedplants2.pdf

Parks and Trails Corner

Have you visited Pocantico Lake Park?



One of the best attractions our Village offers is incredible access to the great outdoors. We are surrounded by parks, open spaces, forests, and trails. The County-owned 164-acre Pocantico Lake Public Park is one of the prettiest parks in Westchester and is located in both Briarcliff and Mt Pleasant, with access roads from both. Nestled along the Pocantico River, and in between the NYS Rockefeller Preserve and Saw Mill River Audubon protected wetlands, it is a bird-watcher's delight with over 100 different species, including blue herons, nesting ospreys and bald eagles.



The 27-acre lake used to be a reservoir providing drinking water for thousands of county residents, and when it was threatened by development in the 1980s the County purchased the land and lake to protect the lake as a future source of drinking water. Currently, the Mt Pleasant Planning Board is holding public hearings to decide the fate of a proposed 31-home subdivision on the western side of the lake amid environmental concerns.

Visit the park and walk to the shores of the lake where you can skip stones, meditate, and just experience the tranquility of a forested lake that makes you feel as if you are hundreds of miles away from NYC. Walk the path on top of the dam and follow the Pocantico River as it flows down the hill and enters the NYS Rockefeller Preserve. Say "Hello" to those fishing (or get your own license and pole and join them!) and remember to keep your dogs on a leash! Enjoy!

Obie and Monty March 2023.

Leashes were removed for picture taking only.

Hiking Project app: Yes, Pocantico Park Loop

Parking: Laurel Lane or Old Sleepy Hollow Road in Briarcliff; Pocantico Lake Road or the intersection of Old Sleepy Hollow Rd Ext and Sleepy Hollow Rd in Mt Pleasant. Please follow all parking signage!

Dogs allowed: Yes, on leash

Save Energy/Earn Cash with GridRewards

What is GridRewards?

- GridRewards is a free app that tells you when and how to reduce your energy usage.
- When you use GridRewards, you earn cash payments while reducing your electricity bill. **Sign up before April 28th to be eligible for cash rewards!**

How does it work?

- Unplug during events (the app will notify you of events, mostly on hot summer afternoons; 5-10 times a year).
- The app gives you suggestions on how to reduce energy usage (eg. turn up your thermostat by 1.5 degrees; run your laundry at night etc.).
- 98% of GridRewards participants got paid last year.

Where does the money come from?

- Con Edison pays you to reduce electricity at peak times to help maintain system reliability in your community.

Who is eligible?

- Households in the Con Edison service area are eligible.
- Estimated earnings are based on a typical household's 1kW savings during a GridRewards event.

Get paid; Get your friends paid

- Get \$10 for each friend you refer.
- Work together with your neighborhood to earn extra rewards and multiply your impact.

For more information, visit www.gridrewards.com or www.sustainablewestchester.org

GridRewards

Unplug. Get paid.

Introducing GridRewards

An award-winning, free app that pays you real money for smarter energy behavior — it's as simple as the flip of a switch.

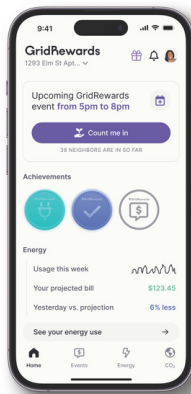
Download GridRewards

Scan QR code with your phone camera.



Learn more

tinyurl.com/GR-sign-up-steps



Unplug.

We'll tell you when to save electricity, and tell you how.

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Make real money — up to 20% of your energy utility bill.

Save the planet.

Avoid running inefficient, fossil fuel power plants.

Get \$10 for every friend you refer.

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GridRewards™ is a product of Logical Buildings. To learn more about how Logical Buildings helps building owners and home owners save money and reduce emissions, contact gridrewards@logicalbuildings.com or call 908-517-3730

SAC Winter Recap

- We have a new name-**The Sustainability Advisory Committee** (formerly the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee).
- Members of the SAC attended the Great Westchester Pollinator Meetup on January 22nd to learn about the use of electric equipment for sustainable landscaping.



- We partnered with **Con Ed**, the **Greater Hudson Valley Electric Vehicle Association**, and **Sustainable Westchester** to discuss energy efficiency for homes, electric vehicles, and rebates/incentives that can help with cost savings. Thanks to Con Ed for displaying the stunning Ford Mustang Mach-E. Thanks to the Greater Hudson Valley EVA for all the free goodies!



**NYS SENATOR
PETE HARCKHAM
&
ASSEMBLYMEMBER
CHRIS BURDICK**

invite you to a virtual Town Hall on

**LEVERAGING REBATES & INCENTIVES
FOR HOME ENERGY UPGRADES**

presented by

 **SUSTAINABLE
WESTCHESTER**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16
7:00-8:00 PM**

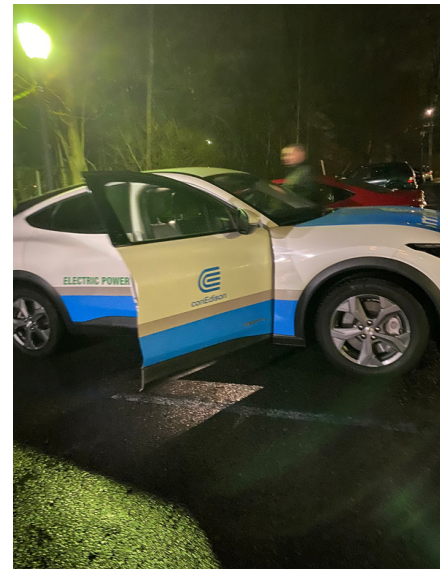
Replacing your home's heating and cooling equipment with a heat pump can save energy and money!

Learn more about heat pumps and how to get started electrifying your home with federal tax credits, utility rebates and tax incentives.

Speakers include Sustainable Westchester's EnergySmart Homes Contractor Partners, Rewiring America and utility representatives.

Register at: bit.ly/HomeEnergyFeb16

Questions? Call Sustainable Westchester at (914) 242-4725 ext. 122



SAC Winter Recap

We are proud of SAC member Seth Leitman (The Green Living Guy) who was recently named #1 by the EV Industry Blog in the category of EV Thought Leaders.



Category: EV Thought Leaders



EV THOUGHT LEADERS

**21 EV Thought
Leaders You Should
Follow**

These individuals are not only pushing boundaries but inspiring others to do so. Whether it's developing groundbreaking technology or pioneering new business models, these EV experts have shaped the landscape of modern electric vehicles.

1. Seth Leitman, The Green Living Guy



Seth Leitman is a passionate advocate for the green living movement, working tirelessly to provide sustainable transportation solutions. He has worked with major automakers and startups to develop impactful electric vehicle technologies. He's an author of multiple books on the topic and a sought-after speaker at conferences worldwide. He's also the owner of an [EV consulting firm](#) that helps businesses and individuals go green.

Follow him on [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#).

EAC Winter Recap

- We have a new name – the **Environmental Advisory Council** (formerly the Horticultural Advisory Committee) – and corresponding list of roles and responsibilities in the Village.
- We've begun outlining initiatives for protecting and enhancing the natural areas and green spaces in the Village.
- We assisted the Village in choosing planting locations for about 30 new trees!
- Members of the EAC attended the "Great Westchester Pollinator Meetup" in January.
- We held a training session for Village Parks staff about invasive plant identification and native plant and tree maintenance.
- We've started planning for spring and summer programs.

Upcoming Events

The **SAC** in collaboration with the Briarcliff Recreation Department bring you **Earth Day 2023** on **Saturday, April 22nd 10am-2pm** at **Law Park Pavilion**

Our event will feature:

- A spotlight on electric vehicles sponsored by the **Greater Hudson Valley Electric Vehicle Association**
- A spotlight on clean energy technologies brought to you by **Sustainable Westchester**
- A spotlight on native plants brought to you by the **Environmental Advisory Council**
- Drop-off bins for recycling T-shirts and shoes
- **Stash the Trash** community clean-up event which will be **Briarcliff Manor PTA's National Day of Service**
- "Green" food trucks/Ice cream truck
- Craft activities and music

The **SAC** and **EAC** in collaboration with the **Briarcliff Manor Public Library** bring you an outdoor movie event on **Friday, May 5th, at the Law Park Pavilion**. Join us to watch **Uninvited**, a movie about invasive species and their impact on local ecosystems. Stay tuned for more information about this event!

Join us at our meetings to learn what we are working on, and to see how you can contribute to making Briarcliff cleaner and greener!

SAC Meetings: First Thursday of every month, 7:00pm

EAC Meetings: Fourth Thursday of every month, 7:00 pm
Village Hall, Court Room

For more information, visit us at

www.briarcliffmanor.gov/sustainability-advisory-committee and
www.briarcliffmanor.gov/environmental-advisory-council

SAC

Padma Sridhar (Chair)
Mary Torres
Stacey Winnick
Seth Leitman
Jennifer Sendek
Melissa Rinzler

EAC

Amy Karpati , Ph.D. (Chair)
Brooke Beebe
Steven Kavee
Dawn Orza